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## State Service

MONTANA MERIT SYSTEM  
COUNCIL



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# THE MERIT SYSTEM COUNCIL

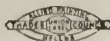
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## **WHAT IS THE MERIT SYSTEM?**

The merit system is a fair and impartial method of recruiting and selecting employees on the basis of ability, merit and fitness to be determined by practical, competitive examinations. In each of the forty-eight States at least some of the state departments secure their employees either through a merit system or state civil service. State civil service programs are in operation in twenty-one states at the present time. Three of these programs have been established during the last three years. In Montana the Merit System Council serves the Montana Unemployment Compensation Commission, the State Department of Public Welfare, the State Board of Health and the United States Employment Service in Montana.

The Federal Social Security Act, as amended August 10, 1939, requires that the Unemployment Compensation Commission, the Department of Public Welfare and the State Board of Health must make their personnel selection on a merit basis. Each of these three agencies originally developed its own merit system and in 1940 the three separate merit systems were combined under the present organization. Through one system serving three agencies it is possible to recruit the employees that are needed at a considerable saving to the taxpayers of the State as compared with the cost of operating three separate recruiting agencies. A large share of the costs of the Merit System office is paid from Federal funds allocated to the various state agencies. These costs are shared by the agencies according to the amount of service performed for each one. The administrative body for the merit system is the Council of three members, appointed for terms of six years in such a way that one term expires every two years. The merit system program is directly administered by a Merit System Supervisor, appointed by the Council with the approval of the participating agencies.

## **WHAT IS THE PROCEDURE IN THE MERIT SYSTEM PROGRAM?**

1. An attempt is made to inform every citizen in the State through publicity in the newspapers, over the radio, by the use of posters and printed announcements and through personal contacts, about possible employment opportunities and examination dates.

2. Examinations are constructed in the Merit System Council office by persons trained in the science of test construction. Much of the test material is secured through cooperation with other Civil Service agencies throughout the nation. The Merit System Council secures the services of local people to administer the examinations throughout the State according to the need for tests, as shown by the number of applications received. Examinations are given in any county in the State when five or more applications have been filed from that area.

3. All examination papers are returned to the Merit System Council office in Helena, where they are graded impartially and objectively by members of the merit system office staff who have been trained for this work. In all parts of the examination process candidates are known by number only.

4. The names of all persons who pass all parts of each examination are listed in rank order according to their final examination grades. These lists are called registers.

5. When a vacancy arises in one of the agencies served by the merit system a request for certification is submitted by the personnel officer of that agency and the Merit System Supervisor then certifies the three highest names from the appropriate register, from which a selection must be made to fill the vacancy. The agency itself, not the Merit System Council, determines which one of the three candidates shall be selected for appointment.

## **WHAT IS THE STATE DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC WELFARE?**

The State Department of Public Welfare was created by the twenty-fifth session of the legislature in 1937. It has four principal divisions: the Division of Public Assistance, the Division of Auditing and Finance, the Division of Statistics and Research, and the Division of Child Welfare Services. The units consist of a state office and fifty-six county departments of public welfare.

The public assistance division administers the programs of old age assistance, aid to needy blind, and aid to dependent children. Old Age Assistance provides cash monthly payments to needy persons who have attained the age of sixty-five and meet residence and other qualifications. Aid to Needy Blind is paid to persons who are blind and meet residence and other qualifications. Aid to Dependent Children is paid for care of needy children up to eighteen years of age who have been deprived of parental support by reason of death, abandonment, or mental or physical incapacity, and who meet residence and other qualifications.



The Child Welfare Division administers services to children in all the counties of the state through the medium of consultants and child welfare workers. They supervise children in foster homes; investigate prospective foster homes; take care of children committed to institutions and work with communities in programs for the prevention of juvenile delinquency.

## WHAT IS THE STATE BOARD OF HEALTH?

The activities of the State Board of Health are carried out through nine divisions. These divisions comprise that of Administration, Epidemiology and Rural Health Work, Sanitary Engineering, Maternal and Child Health, Vital Statistics, Hygienic Laboratory, Industrial Hygiene, Food and Drug, and Crippled Children.

The funds for the administration of the State Board of Health are provided by legislative enactment and also include Federal grants from Titles V and VI of the Social Security Act.

Included in the personnel of the State Board of Health are medical doctors, engineers, chemists, bacteriologists, public health nurses, health educational workers, clerks, and stenographers. Except for stenographic and clerical help, highly specialized educational and experience requirements are needed for practically all the positions in the agency.

The Division of Epidemiology has to do with the investigation and control of communicable diseases throughout the State and assists in the organization and development of programs for county health departments.

The Maternal and Child Health Division carries on a general program for the protection of maternal and child health. Also included under this Division are the public health nurses and health education activities.

The Vital Statistics Division keeps the records of all births, deaths, marriages, and divorces, and provides certified copies for the same.

The Sanitary Engineering Division supervises the safety of all public water supplies in the State and investigates any sanitary conditions which might be a health hazard.

The Hygienic Laboratory carries out all laboratory procedures which would be of aid in the diagnosis of communicable diseases.

The Industrial Hygiene Division carries out studies of working conditions in the different industries in order to improve working conditons and eliminate any health hazards that might be due to the industry itself.

The Crippled Children's Division supervises the treatment and care of any crippling condition occurring in persons under 21 years of age whose condition might be improved by such treatment and care.

The Division of Food and Drugs conducts investigations to know that all food that is offered for sale is not adulterated and meets the requirements of the Pure Food and Drug Act. This Division also licenses and investigates the sanitary condition of all food-handling establishments and tourist camps.

## **WHAT IS THE MONTANA UNEMPLOYMENT COMPENSATION COMMISSION?**

The Montana Unemployment Compensation Commission administers a statewide program of unemployment insurance to provide money payments to persons justifiably unemployed and actively engaged in seeking suitable work through a system of free public employment offices. The funds used for meeting such payments are obtained by a tax levied upon Montana employers, but through federal-state cooperation, the cost of administering the unemployment compensation program is paid by the federal government.

Payroll taxes, referred to in the state law as "contributions," are levied, generally, against industrial employers who give employment in twenty weeks of a year or who have an annual payroll in excess of \$500. However, certain types of employment are not included in the unemployment compensation law, and no contributions are required on payrolls for this employment.

Employers who give employment subject to the provisions of the Montana unemployment compensation law are required to pay contributions at the rate of 2.7 per cent of their payrolls, except that no contributions are required for that part of any salary which is in excess of \$3,000 per year.

Although employees make tax contributions under the federally administered program providing for old age and survivors' insurance, no part of the cost of Montana unemployment compensation is borne by the employee.

The Montana Unemployment Compensation Commission is entrusted with two chief duties: first, the collection of contributions from subject employers and the proper accounting thereof; second, the payment of benefits to unemployed individuals who are eligible for unemployment compensation under the law.

All funds received through contributions, and penalties and interest from employers are deposited

to the credit of the State Treasurer, who, in turn, transfers the funds to the United States Treasury Department, where they are invested in interest-bearing securities. No part of these funds is used for administrative purposes. All, including interest on the fund, are reserved exclusively for use in payment of benefits to eligible unemployed workers.

Benefits are paid to eligible unemployed workers on a weekly basis for weeks of total unemployment. The minimum weekly payment is \$5 and the maximum weekly payment is \$15. The maximum duration of weekly payments is sixteen weeks. Benefits are paid only when suitable work for the claimant is not available.

The amount of the weekly payment for a claimant is based upon the wages he has earned under taxable employment during his individual base period, which is figured as the first four out of the last five completed calendar quarters immediately prior to the filing of a valid claim.

## **WHAT IS THE UNITED STATES EMPLOYMENT SERVICE?**

Under the Montana law setting up the Unemployment Compensation Commission of Montana as part of this state's participation in the national social security program, one division, known as the Montana State Employment Service, performs the employment functions assigned to the Commission. It occupies the field previously served by the National Re-Employment Service, furnishing the public with free employment facilities.

Shortly after declaration of war between this nation and the axis countries, in December, 1941, the President proclaimed federalization of this state's Employment Service, as well as those in other states, for the duration of the war. Under orders of the President it then became the Montana Division of the United States Employment Service, operating and functioning under direction of the Social Security Board and of its Chairman, Paul V. McNutt.

Following creation of the War Manpower Commission on April 18, 1942, also under chairmanship of Mr. McNutt, the United States Employment Service became the field agency of the War Manpower Commission and in the fall of that year the U.S.E.S. was officially transferred from the Social Security Board to the War Manpower Commission, for which it is now, in a general sense, the operating arm.

Montana's twenty local U.S.E.S. offices, situated in the more populous centers, are grouped into three areas under the supervision of area directors who



are directly responsible to the state manpower director. The line of authority extends upward to the Regional organization, which embraces Montana and four sister states: Wyoming, Idaho, Utah, and Colorado. This is one of twelve Regions into which the nation is divided. These Regions are directly answerable to the War Manpower Commission at the nation's capital.

Operations of the local offices of the United States Employment Service are primarily the function of bringing prospective employer and prospective employee together. Under federal direction these offices have also continued their status as claims-taking offices for the Unemployment Compensation Commission.

Originally organized to secure jobs for unemployed persons, the U.S.E.S. has continued to deal with the employment situation as it changed from a market of surplus labor and scarce jobs to a market of abundant jobs and scarce labor.

Under the impact of these war-made conditions the United States Employment Service of the War Manpower Commission is now dedicated to the program pattern defined as follows:

1. Determination of the total manpower situation by areas.
2. Determination of the relative urgency for products and services.
3. Determination of individual employer needs for manpower.
4. Identification and removal of causes of failure to meet and maintain employment levels.
5. Guidance of workers to places of employment where they are most needed.
6. Bringing production and manpower supply into balance.
7. Administration of these steps at the local level with community participation.

## **RECRUITING FOR STATE SERVICE**

**Why does one have to take an examination to get a job?**

In spite of its shortcomings, the objective test is the best means in use at the present time for selection of workers. The use of minimum qualifications and scientifically constructed tests is commonly accepted in industry as well as government agencies. Many industrial concerns use written examinations very extensively in the selection of new employees as well as in the selection of candidates for promotion to higher classes of positions. Test results reveal not only differences in ability to perform certain tasks, but also indicate differences in



ability to make adjustments to new situations and to profit by training.

### **Can anyone take a Merit System examination?**

Anyone who makes application in the proper way and meets the minimum qualifications for the position may take the examination.

### **Where can one learn of the examinations?**

Announcements of examinations are sent to newspapers and radio stations at least three weeks before the examination date. Detailed announcements are also sent to County Clerks, Public Welfare offices, Post Offices, schools, U. S. Employment Service offices, public and private libraries and other public places throughout the State. Information may also be secured by writing to the Merit System Council, 16 Granite Block, Helena, Montana.

### **Does one have to be a resident of Montana to take the examinations?**

In accordance with Montana law, positions in State and County offices are filled by residents of the State whenever possible. Examinations are announced and given on a nation-wide basis for those classes of positions for which the supply of properly trained personnel is not adequate within the State.

### **Are there any age limits?**

No.

## **APPLYING FOR POSITIONS**

### **Where are the examinations given?**

Merit System examinations are given in any county in the State when five or more applications have been received from that area. Applicants from the less populous counties are allowed to take the examinations at the larger centers if they are given there at an earlier date than in their own county.

### **What types of positions are available in the agencies?**

The positions are classified into two main groups: clerical and professional. All classes of stenographers and clerks are called clerical employees. Welfare workers, claims examiners, interviewers, nurses, doctors, etc., are professional employees. The minimum requirements for practically all classes of clerical employees are identical in all the agencies. Requirements for the various classes of professional

positions vary according to the duties and responsibilities of the position. The general class titles for professional positions in the various agencies are listed below:

### UNEMPLOYMENT COMPENSATION COMMISSION

Director	Field Advisor
Field Supervisor	Supervising Claims Examiner
Attorney	Claims Examiner
Informational Representative	Chief Accountant
Chief Field Advisor	Accountant

### DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC WELFARE

Director, Public Assistance  
Administrative Assistant  
State Field Supervisor  
County Supervisor  
Caseworker  
Director of Child Welfare Services  
Child Welfare Supervisor  
Child Welfare Consultant  
Child Welfare Worker  
Director of Auditing and Finance  
Accountant  
Director of Statistics and Research  
Director of Supplies and Services  
Informational Representative

### STATE BOARD OF HEALTH

Epidemiologist and Director Rural Health Work  
Director of Division of Maternal and Child Health  
Director of Health Education  
Supervisor of Public Health Nursing  
District Advisory Nurse  
Nursing Consultant  
Orthopedic Consultant  
Public Health Nurse  
Director Division of Services for Crippled Children  
Physical Therapist  
Nursing Supervisor in Rheumatic Fever  
Medical Social Work Supervisor  
Director Division of Industrial Hygiene  
Industrial Chemist  
Director Division of Sanitary Engineering  
Bacteriologist-Chemist  
Sanitary Engineer  
Director Division of Food and Drugs  
Chemist, Food and Drugs  
Sanitary Inspector  
Director Hygienic Laboratory  
Bacteriologist-Serologist  
Deputy Registrar, Vital Statistics  
Fiscal Agent

### U. S. EMPLOYMENT SERVICE

Director	Interviewer
Field Supervisor	Statistician
Manager	Accountant

### MERIT SYSTEM COUNCIL Supervisor

The following classes of clerical employees are found in one or more of the participating agencies:

Secretary  
Senior Stenographer  
Intermediate Stenographer  
Junior Stenographer  
Typist  
Chief Clerk  
Senior Clerk  
Intermediate Clerk  
Junior Clerk  
Junior Clerk-Typist  
Senior Accounting Clerk  
Intermediate Accounting Clerk  
Junior Accounting Clerk  
Supervising File Clerk  
File Clerk  
Statistical Clerk  
Addressograph Operator  
Bookkeeping Machine Operator  
Key Punch Operator  
Telephone Operator

Examinations are very rarely held for the higher classes of professional positions since they are usually filled by promotion, consequently, most of the vacancies that are filled through open competitive examinations are in the lower classes of positions.

### **How many positions are available under the Merit System?**

In the three agencies there are about one hundred different kinds of positions. Many of the higher classes of positions are nearly always filled by promotion.

### **What examinations offer the best opportunities for employment?**

Most vacancies occur and examinations are given most frequently for Junior Stenographer, Intermediate Stenographer, Senior Stenographer, Junior Clerk, Junior Caseworker, Junior Interviewer, and Junior Child Welfare Worker. There is also a great demand for Public Health Nurses.

### **How often are examinations given?**

A state-wide examination program is conducted every year in the spring, planned to come just before the time that high schools and colleges complete their year's work. Other examinations are given as required, tests being scheduled in any county from which five or more applications have been received.

### **Can one's name be placed on a mailing list?**

Yes. Persons who wish to receive merit examination announcements, application blanks or other literature can receive these from the Merit System Office, 16 Granite Block, Helena, Montana. Persons



who request to be placed on the mailing list will receive examination announcements as they are released.

### **Who determines one's eligibility for these positions?**

Minimum qualifications have been established for each position by each agency. Members of the merit system staff review each application to determine whether the candidate possesses the required qualifications. In doubtful cases persons who are familiar with the field for which the examinations are being given are called in to help determine whether the candidate has the minimum qualifications for the position for which he has applied.

## **CONSTRUCTION AND ADMINISTRATION OF EXAMINATIONS**

### **What are examination questions about?**

Two types of material are usually found in the examinations: first, questions which pertain directly to the duties of the position; second, questions to determine the aptitude necessary for successful performance on the job, such as ability to follow directions rapidly and correctly. In addition to the written part of the examination a rating of training and experience is included as part of the final grade for all higher classes of positions. For those positions involving considerable responsibility or frequent contact with the public, an oral interview may be required of all candidates who pass the written test. A performance test is always required of candidates for stenographic positions to determine their actual ability in typing and stenography.

### **Can one secure sample test questions in studying for examinations?**

No. Sample questions are of very little help in preparing for an objective type examination, since the field covered by most of these examinations is so extensive that there may be very little similarity in individual questions in successive forms of examinations. The examination announcement lists the fields of training which will be covered in the test for each class of position.

### **Who writes the test items?**

Much of the material for test items is secured from the State Technical Advisory Service of the Social Security Board in Washington, which maintains a staff of examination experts who prepare

material for merit system agencies throughout the nation. Material is also secured from the Civil Service Assembly which makes available on a cooperative basis test material from all member civil service agencies in the United States and Canada. Where test items of a local nature specifically applying to Montana conditions are needed, Montana residents who are familiar with the requirements for the position involved are employed as consultants.

### **How long are the examinations?**

The average time for an examination is about three hours, but a candidate is allowed to use as much as four and one-half hours. The performance test for stenographers takes about one and one-half hours.

### **Who administers the examinations?**

A head monitor conducts the examinations at each test center. Usually this person is a high school or college instructor in that city. When it is necessary he is assisted by monitors and dictation monitors.

### **If one fails an examination, is he disqualified from trying again?**

No. Candidates who fail are promptly informed and if they wish to be re-examined they need merely notify the Merit System office. A new application is not required unless new training or experience has been received since the previous application was filed.

## **GRADING EXAMINATIONS AND REPORTING RESULTS**

### **Who corrects the examination papers?**

All papers are sent to the State office of the Merit System Council at Helena where they are scored and re-scored by individuals who have been given special training for this work. All papers which do not receive passing grades are scored a third time to make certain that no errors in scoring have been made.

### **How is one's identity guarded?**

Candidates for examination receive an identification number when they are notified of the time and place for the tests. This identification number is used on all written test papers and the identity of the candidate is not known until after the papers have been scored. The application blank is so arranged

that identifying data such as the name and address and photograph of the candidate can be detached, while the rating of training and experience is being made. During oral interviews candidates are introduced to the interviewing board by number only, and are rated only by those board members who do not know them personally. Every effort is made to insure the impartial treatment of all candidates for positions under the Merit System.

### **How does one learn if he has passed?**

The Merit System Council notifies all candidates of their final grade in the examinations as soon as all papers have been graded. Notices cannot be sent out, nor grades given from the office, until all test papers in a particular group have been checked and the statistics for that examination program have been compiled. In many examination programs the passing grade is based on the average for the group rather than at a fixed per cent, and consequently cannot be established until all papers have been scored.

### **How long does one wait to learn results of examinations?**

The time varies according to the size of the examination program. In some programs notices can be sent out on the day following the written tests. In other cases it may take about three weeks.

## **REGISTERS**

### **What is a register?**

A register is a list of names of persons who have passed all parts of an examination arranged according to the final grades attained in the examination. Grades in the various parts of the examination process, such as the written test, performance test, rating of training and experience and oral interview, are combined according to the weights specified for each in the examination announcement. Promotional registers may be set up and used for promotional purposes. In addition to the parts of the examination used for open competitive examinations, promotional examinations always include an evaluation of the candidate's service rating.

### **How long will one's name remain on the register?**

In general, registers remain in effect as long as they are of use to the participating agencies. Under normal conditions that is about two years. Under



war-time conditions registers are usually not cancelled when new examinations are given, and the new candidates are added to the register according to their final ratings, so that it is possible for the candidate who has just taken the Merit System test to be number one on the register, although there may be several other names from previous examination programs. This procedure is used because it makes certain that the best available candidates at any given time are given first consideration.

## **CERTIFICATION OF APPOINTMENTS**

### **What is meant by certification?**

After the examination process is completed and the list of names of those people who passed is prepared in the order of their final ratings, names of applicants are certified from the top of the register to fill existing vacancies in the agencies which the Merit System serves. Three names are certified for each vacancy so that the appointing authority may exercise some choice in appointment. A name may be removed from a register if the person refuses three times to accept a position under conditions which he previously agreed to in writing, if statements he made on his application are found to be false, or if he cannot be reached at the address given.

### **How and when does one get an appointment?**

Appointments are made by the personnel director of the agency from the list certified when a vacancy occurs. The Merit System Council makes no appointments outside its own office.

### **Will one have to take an appointment anywhere in Montana if he passes his examination?**

A person may declare himself available on a local or state-wide basis. He will be certified only for those localities at those salaries which he has specified as acceptable. If, for any reason, the applicant wishes to change his statement as to acceptable localities or salary, he may do so.

### **Where are the jobs located?**

There are County Welfare Offices and Public Health Offices in almost all the counties in the state and Employment Service Offices in most of the larger cities in the state. State offices for all agencies are located in Helena.

**When a department head selects a new employee, must he employ one of the three highest persons on the register if they are all willing to accept employment?**

Yes, every appointment must be made from the three highest eligibles actually available at the time the position is filled.

## **WORK UNDER THE MERIT RULE**

**What are the advantages in working under the merit rule?**

**THE EMPLOYEE:** With merit status the worker receives a security of tenure that he does not have under other types of appointment. Under the principle of merit rule, he cannot be dismissed without cause, and all decisions concerning salary increases, transfers, and promotions are based upon a carefully prepared service rating and personnel record of his proficiency on his job. The competent worker may feel assured of a potential public service career in which he may expect to go as far as his energies and abilities can take him. Sick leave and annual vacation with pay are granted to employees working under the merit rule.

**THE AGENCY:** The merit principle operates to the advantage of the employer as well as to the employee. Selection of employees through the merit system relieves the employer of pressure and undue influence in the appointment of employees. Promotions made on a merit basis help prevent dissatisfaction and charges of favoritism. Because employees have greater security of tenure, the turnover is reduced thereby saving money on training programs. Since candidates for employment are required to pass rigid examinations in the field in which they are to work, the agency is assured that the new employee is qualified for his position.

**What is the classification plan?**

By the classification of positions is meant the grouping together of all positions which have the same or nearly the same kind of duties and responsibilities and which require similar abilities and skills for successful performance of the work. For example, all stenographic positions in agencies served by the Merit System are placed in classes in a stenographic series, and all the accountant positions are placed in classes in an accounting series. These series of classes are broken down into one or more groups according to the difficulties and responsibilities of the work. Thus the duties of a Senior Stenographer are considerably more difficult and

involve more responsibilities than those of a Junior Stenographer, and an Accountant must have much more training and experience in his field of work than a Junior Accounting Clerk.

### **What is the compensation plan?**

A compensation plan is a statement of the salary schedule for each class of position so established that the rates assigned are consistent with the functions outlined in the specifications for the class. The compensation plan lists the minimum and maximum salary as well as the advancement steps to be used in making salary increases. Salary ranges vary somewhat in the different agencies.

### **What is the probationary period?**

The probationary period is the first six months of employment in a new position and serves as a working test period to determine the fitness of the candidate for the work for which he has been appointed. During this time the agency determines whether the employee can actually perform, or learn to perform, the work for which he was hired. Reports on his progress, called service ratings, are made out at regular intervals during his probationary appointment by his immediate supervisor. At the conclusion of the probationary period, the appointing authority signs a statement to indicate whether the employee is satisfactory and should be given more permanent status; or is unsatisfactory and should be dismissed.

### **What are the opportunities for advancement?**

In all agencies operating under the Merit System, higher classes of positions are filled whenever possible by promotion within the service in preference to new appointments. The appointing authority has the right to consider for appointment any employee who meets the minimum requirements for the higher class of position and whose work, as indicated by his service ratings, has been satisfactory in all respects. Promotions can be made on the basis of competitive or non-competitive examinations.

### **What are the opportunities for salary increase?**

After the satisfactory completion of the probationary period, the employee may be given a one-step increase in salary. Other increases may be allowed at six-month or annual intervals according to the need for salary increases as indicated by salaries paid elsewhere and the availability of funds



to make such increases. Under the Merit System, salary increases are not automatic at fixed intervals, but are based on the quality of work performed.

**MERIT SYSTEM COUNCIL offices are located  
in Helena in Room 16, Granite Block.**

**The telephone number is 97.**

**Visitors are always  
welcome!**



